



BLUR

ENGLISH POSES

AROUND THIS TIME LAST YEAR BLUR WERE AT NUMBER Eight in the Gallup Charts with "There's No Other Way" and their vocalist, Damon Albarn, was promising the world that their soon-to-be released debut album, "Leisure", would "kill Baggy", the scene that had supposedly spawned them. "Leisure" went into the Charts at Number Seven and Baggy died. Though it's by no means certain that the one event caused the other (Baggy's death was an event in our books), Blur should definitely have enjoyed the last laugh.

Sadly we fickle, scene-hungry hacks had already roped them into the infamous Scene That Celebrates Itself. Now, while it's true this had more to do with Blur's extra-curricular activities than their sound, Damon was moved to declare that their next album (that they're presently recording) would destroy that scene too.

Nine months on, Blur are readying themselves for "Rollercoaster", a tour Damon describes as "the best thing that's happened to British music in a very long time."

"All four bands are white, middle-class and from the West and, though we've all got a different set of attitudes, they're all centred around that end-of-the-century nausea we're all suffering from."

"It's just nausea," he adds, "teenage rebellion is dead. That's what the Blank Generation thing we started is all about. It's about a whole generation of bands who play rock music, for want of a better term, but aren't rebelling against anything. We've all seen

THE STUD BROTHERS
catch up with the
ever-so-English singer
Damon and find out
about his band's new
single, new film
projects and their
aborted plans for a
teenage revolution.
Main pic: STEVE GULLICK

so many rebellions fail, so many teenage ideals come to nothing that it's impossible to really believe in anything any more, to feel that there's any ultimate goals. It's like smoking dope in front of your parents isn't an issue any more, playing loud music isn't an issue, even being non-political isn't an issue. It's difficult to know your place and your importance."

"**POP** Scene", Blur's new single, is light years away from the ambient abstractions that came to define The Scene. It's a Nineties punk rock song with a horn-driven biker chorus and heavy doses of narcissism and nihilism courtesy of Damon. "Everyone is a clever clone," he sing-songs, presumably thinking of some of his former drinking partners (though on this issue Damon is uncharacteristically discrete).

"Pop Scene" sounds a little too close to the Buzzcocks for comfort, neither is it particularly indicative of Blur's new direction. "Mace" and "Badgeman Brown", the two tracks that back the single, and the few demos we've heard from

their forthcoming album (set for release in mid-August), reveal Blur to be in an increasingly eccentric mood. "Badgeman Brown" cuts seamlessly from an HM riff to a druggy drift of acoustic guitars and sugary vocal harmonies, and Damon's voice, distorted by static, sounds weirdly disembodied. "Mace" is a consciously slovenly affair. Possessed of a happy-go-lucky, can-kicking English pessimism, it's like a black comic rewrite of the Lovin' Spoonful's "Daydream", where all emotions are reduced to a simple shrug. "Mace" appears in fact to sum up Blur's present state of mind.

"Like I say," says Damon, "What can you do, what can you change? People like Primal Scream annoy me because they take on the trappings of teenage rebellion and it's very shallow. They just seem to be titillating teenage hormones really. And we deliberately choose to be even more shallow, just to avoid any embarrassment."

WHILE on the "Rollercoaster" tour, Blur will begin making their first movie, a documentary about provincial England to be directed by the aggressively named Storm Thorgeson, the man who, along with Syd Barrett, conceived Pink Floyd's early visual effects.

"It was very exciting for us," says Damon, "because Storm rang us up independently and said he wanted to make a film with us. It was interesting because we've always seen ourselves like an early Pink Floyd - they had a similar outlook on life, they had a similar education and they came from a similar part of the country. And obviously I was completely infatuated with Syd Barrett. So we got the money together and we're slowly putting a film together about England which, hopefully, some of "Rollercoaster" will feature in. It'll be for Arena or some Channel 4 arts programme and it'll be out around the time of our next album."

Will Blur feature heavily in it? Damon shakes his head.

"Well, we've also got the finance to make a film during our sets which will be a minor English opus, but Storm's film will have Blur just as a part of Englishness. It's really about filming the towns we go to and the gigs are just a reason to go to those towns. There will be music, but it's gonna be like nothing that's been done before, this isn't the year of nostalgia."

"It really fascinates me now, I've really got into the idea of narrowing everything down down to the Englishness of everything we do. When you do that everything you do has much more force



because it holds more relevance, you're deliberately focussing on what you know and what you are as a result of your conditioning. I wouldn't call it an honest approach because if I said I was being honest I'd have no opportunity to change. I hate talking about honesty, if anyone ever called me honest I think I'd shoot myself. It's just an idea of paring yourself down to what you really are. This is a fascinating time to be English and it's great to have things around that focus on that."

Bigmouth's back.
Going blank again.

"Pop Scene" is out on Food on March 30. The "Rollercoaster" tour started on March 23

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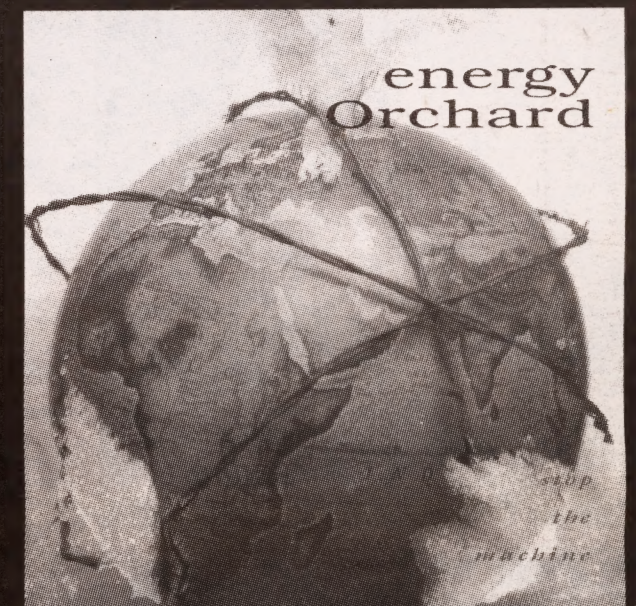
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Tour dates:

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30: Newcastle, Mayfair. 31: Middlesbrough, Town Hall.
April 1: Leeds, Irish Centre. 2: Wolverhampton, Willron Hall. 3: Manchester, Polytechnic.
4: London, The Grand. 5: Brighton, Zap club. 6: Norwich, Waterfront.

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